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ABSTRACT

Designed to merge concept development learned in courses with hands-on teaching experience in schools, the elementary education program at the University of Central Florida, as structured in 1989, is the result of two decades of modifying a strong model. Half of the 120 semester hours are in general education courses and the remaining hours are divided between foundation courses, specialized methods courses, and practica experiences in schools. The junior year practica are coordinated with the block courses which the interns must take at the same time. A teaching unit, a small group report, and an individual case report constitute the core of the junior year interns' assignments. The senior year internship is a semester in duration and is full-time. (RS)

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INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE
New Orleans, Louisiana May 4, 1989

Preservice practica integrated with reading courses at the University of Central Florida

by Richard A. Thompson

Introduction

At the beginning, 1968, the Elementary Education program at the University of Central Florida was devised to provide the most appropriate courses possible for preservice teachers. To this end, a foray was made into the literature and consultants were asked their informed opinions. From these sources, the program planners wove together an elementary education program based on the ideals and ideas of the time. The result was a program which merged concept development learned in courses with hands on teaching experiences in the schools. Education courses and practica in the real setting have been mutually reinforcing and complementary. The sturdy structure remains in tack, but continual program evaluation provides ideas for the few adjustments which have been intitiated. The 1989 structure is the result of two decades of perfecting a strong model.

Elementary Education Program

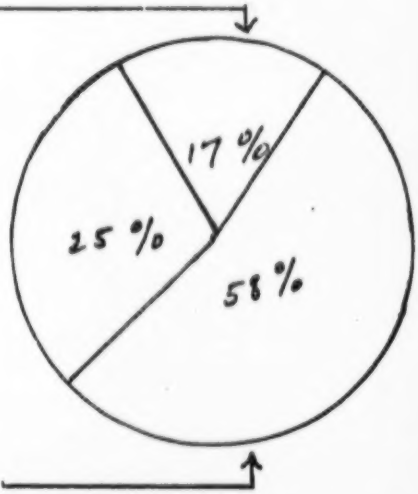
The elementary education program consists of 120 semester hours. Half is required in general education courses and the remainder in the professional education program. The professional education program is divided into three parts: foundations courses, specialized methods courses, and practica experiences in the schools.

Foundation courses consist of
Teaching in the schools
Strategies for teaching
Applied technology in teaching.

Specialized methods courses consist of
art, music, health & pe, science, social studies, math, reading, & language arts

Practica in the schools consist of

Students engage in teaching aide experiences in a school setting four hours per week with specific assignments from the professor who teaches "Stategies for Teaching."



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Junior year student teaching is one semester in which the intern is involved in practica experiences half days, usually four mornings a week. Placement is with classroom teachers who shepherd and supervise the students helping them with their lesson planning, instructional delivery, and classroom discipline. College supervisors also view the interns teaching and coordinate the program with the principals and the students' team of professors. Team meetings are called as necessary.

Senior year internship lasts one semester and is full time.

Reading and language arts components - Elementary education majors make reading and language arts methods courses the core of their program. The courses are

Basic foundations of reading (3 hr.) Introduction to reading: principles, procedures, and current practices. Study of specific techniques and materials for word attack and comprehension.

Diagnostic and corrective reading strategies (3 hr.) An investigation of the needs of individual learners in reading instruction. Organization and techniques for promoting optimuim reading growth. CONCURRENT SCHOOL EXPERIENCES REQUIRED.

Language arts in the elementary school (3 hr.) Content, principles, materials and techniques involved in teaching oral and written language, spelling and handwriting skills. TAKEN PRIOR TO JUNIOR YEAR PRACTICA EXPERIENCES

Literature for children (3 hr.) General survey of books and materials; cirterial for analysis and evaluation; types of books available considered in terms of interests, needs, and abilities of children.

The JUNIOR YEAR PRACTICA is coordinated with the block courses which the interns must take at the same time. In effect, the students are doing assignments from their course instructors and teaching in their school placements in the mornings and taking their methodology courses in the afternoons or evenings. These courses are Health & PE, Math, and Diagnostic & Corrective Reading, the second reading course.

The student teacher assignments, which are an intregal part of the diagnostic and corrective reading course, perhaps are of most interest as they tie together the reading methodology concepts with the field experiences. In these assignments, interns apply the concepts learned in their courses to the real classroom world.

Although each professor tailors field assignments to his or

her own courses, the following activities and assignments are usually required

Interns are assigned to two different classrooms during their junior year student teaching. One assignment is with a primary teacher and the other with an intermediate or middle school teacher. Two placements give interns experiences with differing age groups. In these placements, they are encouraged to do as many teaching tasks as they have time to perform. These are given to them by their supervising teachers and professors.

The hard core of the interns' assignments are these three:

THE TEACHING UNIT
THE SMALL GROUP REPORT
THE INDIVIDUAL CASE REPORT.

All require teaching students and written documents to be handed in and evaluated by their university professor.

THE TEACHING UNIT is a teaching plan lasting a minimum of four days. Typically an intern takes over a basal story from her teacher and develops the objectives, means & resources, and evalulation tactics. Multiple teacher resource books are to be used to enrich the instructional strategies and to show the students alternative teaching strategies. If it meets with the classroom teachers's approval, the unit is taught and handed in to the course instructor.

THE SMALL GROUP REPORT is the second assignment. In this assignment, the intern works with a small group of students (4-8) assessing them, diagnosing their skill needs and reading levels, and matching appropriate reading material to the students reading abilities, organizing and grouping them to meet their individual needs. This small group experience is meant to be a paradigm of a classroom on a reduced scale.

Assessment includes administering the JAT informal reading inventory, the St. Louis Diagnostic Spelling Test, the Group Word Analysis Test and/or other informal assessing instruments.

Instruction is given using the assessment data for grouping students for similar skill needs with the small group being a paradigm of a whole class. Instruction is provided to meet the individual reading needs of the students. This small group activity lasts 30 to 40 minutes per day. A short report (4-7 pages) is written for the professor to evaluate.

THE INDIVIDUAL CASE REPORT is the third assignment. In this practica activity, the intern works daily with an individual student, who has been designated a remedial reader in need of intervention by the teacher. Assessing instruments as mentioned

above in THE SMALL GROUP REPORT are used. Additional assessing instruments may be used if warranted with the professor and supervising teacher's permissions. Most often, the additional assessment is made using the PRESCRIPTIVE READING INVENTORY which provides a fine analysis of mastered reading skills. The assessing and teaching are conducted by the intern over a five week period. Ideally, the intern works with the student 30 to 45 minutes per day, four days per week. At the end of the intern's placement, post assesssment is completed, and THE INDIVIDUAL CASE REPORT is finalized, turned in to the professor, and evaluated.

These junior year practica reading teaching assignments are a part of the intern's experiences during this semester of daily contact with students and teachers in the public schools. These interns have assignments to be completed in the classroom from their other course instructors. They teach a social studies unit, individual science lessons, and physical education classes. It is demanding and designed that way. Most attrition is voluntary.

THE SENIOR YEAR INTERNSHIP is a semester in duration. It is typical of most teachers' senior year student teaching experiences in that each intern spends a semester in a school in one classroom. Their assignments are to take over the entire teaching responsibility from their supervising teachers as quickly as possible. They usually can slip into their teachers' shoes and start running within a week or two since they have had successful junior block experiences.

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